

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The invention provides a central office metaphor to computing, where features and functions are provided by a one or more servers and

5 communicated to an appliance terminal through a network. Data providers are defined as "services" and are provided by one or more processing resources. The services communicate to display terminals through a network, such as Ethernet. The terminals are configured to display data, and to send keyboard, cursor, audio, and video data through the network to the

10 processing server. Functionality is partitioned so that databases, server and graphical user interface functions are provided by the services, and human interface functionality is provided by the terminal. Communication with the terminals from various services is accomplished by converting disparate output to a common protocol. Appropriate drivers are provided for each

15 service to allow protocol conversion. Multiple terminals are coupled to the network. Users can enable their unique session at any one of the terminals by inserting a "smart card" into a card reader. Removing the card disables the session. Re-inserting the card into the same or any other terminal re-enables the session.

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4-20-98